

March 3, 2015

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am writing to oppose the elimination of library funding from the budget proposed by you and Governor Malloy. The proposal will eliminate funding for programs like Connecticard, the Connecticut Library Consortium, and Grants for Public Libraries. These programs are very important and I ask that you to restore that funding in your final budget.

My family lives in Barkhamsted, a rural community that shares a library (Beardsley & Memorial) in Winchester with that town and Colebrook. Our library is not very large and relies on programs like Connecticard and the Connecticard to adequately serve our needs. If you take away those services, my 11-year-old daughter will be turned away if she needs to request a book from another library to write a school report. If you take away those services, my husband will be turned away if he requests interlibrary loans necessary to teach his college students or learn new methods for treating his patients. If you take away those services, my 8-year-old son will have fewer and fewer young reader's programs in which to participate, because funding and staff training will be gone.

There is no question that we need to cut spending to repair the state's dismal finances. But taking money from our libraries -- institutions that Connecticut families rely on year-round and which are already hampered by minimal funding -- is not the way to do it. It is appalling that you can propose hundreds of thousands of dollars in financial aid for illegal immigrants yet want to cut library programs that benefit literally millions of Connecticut residents. Your budget does not show the respect for Connecticut families and library patrons that we deserve.

I am raising my children to be readers and to appreciate the library. I hope you will show some appreciation for it as well by doing the honorable thing and restoring, or even increasing, the funding that Connecticut libraries receive in your budget.

Sincerely,

Amy E. Rentler  
Barkhamsted, Conn.